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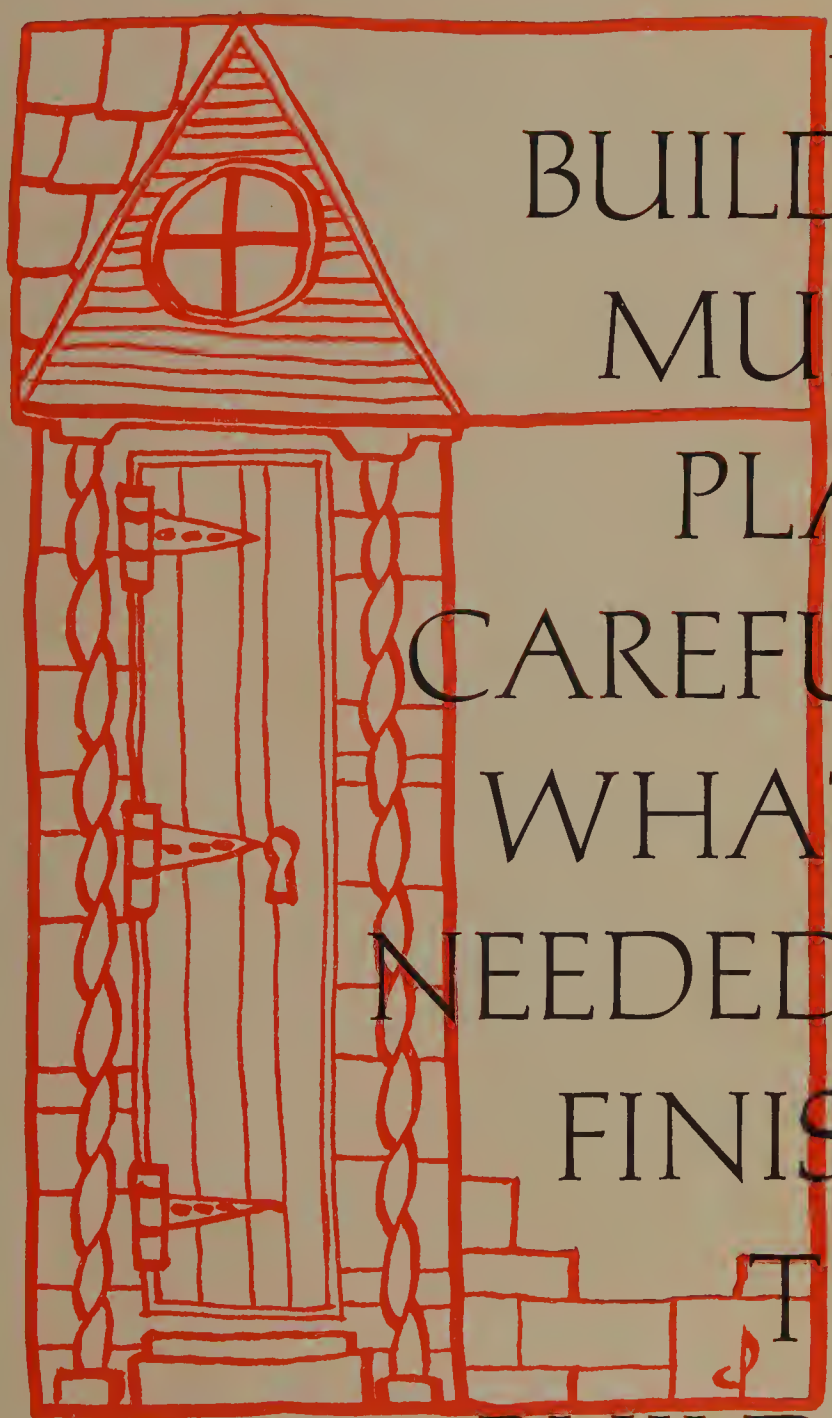

A BUILDER MUST PLAN CAREFULLY WHAT IS NEEDED TO FINISH THE BUILDING

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LEARNING HOW TO LOVE. I

The Natural Affections

A. DURAND

When God himself was asked what was the greatest commandment, he answered that it was to love. And when Saint Thomas Aquinas asks himself what is the most deep-seated passion in our nature, he answers that it is the passion of love. It seems, then, that since God wants us to love, and has made us so that our deepest urge is to love, all we need to do is to "let ourselves go," and love, so deep in us, will carry us to God. But of course we know better than to fall into so dreadful a mistake. The love of which God speaks is the love of him — divine charity, a power natural to no man, a sheer gift of God. And the love which Saint Thomas has in mind and calls a passion is the hunger, the craving, the blind longing that every human being is born with; an urge we share with all the animals; the love which we mean when we speak of "loving" food, drink, rest, play, pleasure, as well as loving people.

Love as a passion can be at war with love as divine charity, and can drive God out of our lives.

But not only can love as a passion carry us away from God; not only can it destroy divine charity; it can even destroy true human love, the kind of love that animals cannot have — reasonable love, the love which thinking beings hold toward other thinking beings. For though we may be animals, we are not mere animals. In all of us there exists, besides passion, a higher urge to love what we ought to love, to love as we should. We have intelligence; we can think; we can see what is good for us, as the animals cannot. We can know what we ought to love and can make ourselves love it. Unless we could and did, there would be no true affection, no true friendship, no true married love in the world. For example, when we speak of a child with a face that "only a mother could love" we are admitting that the poor mother gets a lot of help from mere instinct, from animal passion; but

we are also implying that she can know her duty as a mother, and can go on loving her child because she knows that she *ought* to love him, no matter how ugly he is.

Thus there can be a clash between animal passion and true human love; and there can be a clash between animal passion and the love of God.

But can there ever be conflict between true human love and the true love of God?

No, never. When we are loving man *as we should* we are doing God's will, proving our love of God. And this is why there is a second commandment like unto the first: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

Now some people think, when they notice the danger of a clash between passion and the love of God, that the thing to do is to get rid of passion, to destroy passion entirely. This is a deadly mistake. It is not possible to destroy in us the urge to love, the deepest urge of all. If we try, we shall only be attacking our own nature, and making impossible all love, human and divine. Passion enters into all our loves, human and divine.

A few people — not very many — make the other mistake of thinking that, if one is to love God, one must get rid of all intelligent and reasonable *human* love. A great many more will know better than this, yet remain uneasy about human loves, never quite knowing how to make the human serve the divine, never quite learning how to make our human love into the love of Christ, never quite understanding how to bring together the second-greatest commandment and the first: how to love their neighbor with the same love which they use for God.

The purpose of these articles is to face this problem, to study human loves, and to try to see how they are to be reconciled with divine love.

There seems no safe way through this rather difficult investigation except the slow one of first coming to understand, as well as we can, the various loves which by nature move the human heart. But let us be quite clear as to what we shall be doing. We do not mean to examine these affections in the light of Christian faith, hope, and charity — at least not yet — but simply to study natural loves as we might study natural virtues, using no better

tool than our natural intelligence. We will first try to know and name these passions and inclinations, before considering how our Lord takes possession of them and by means of them drives us on to the love of him who is Love itself.

All human loves may be divided into two general types, which by older writers were given rather clumsy Latinish names: *love of concupiscence* and *love of benevolence*. A recent writer,[1] an Anglican, but nearly always Catholic in mind, offers two terms which are a great improvement: *need-love* and *gift-love*. By one kind we love other persons for what they can give us; by the other we love them for what we can give them. But we must not be quick to call the first type selfish, and the second unselfish. Both can be thoroughly selfish. Man is nothing but a kind of walking emptiness — a bundle of yearnings, cravings, longings. He either longs to be longed-for, or longs to find something or somebody to long for. Both tendencies thus are an expression of need. One has a need to be loved, and a need to love; he yearns to do both and should be unhappy unless doing both.

The first loves, of infancy and childhood, are of course need loves. A child loves father and mother because he needs them. Similar attachments spring up in school between young pupils and a teacher. Anybody whom we need badly we can find it easy to love. Nor does this sort of love necessarily vanish as we grow up. In time of sickness or trouble we may find ourselves in great need of others, perhaps for weeks or months on end. Such people who help us we can come to love. It will not be a very elevated kind of love perhaps, but it will be a vivid one. "A friend in need is a friend indeed." Later in these little studies we shall come to see that our greatest need-love must always be our love of God. Divine charity should not be merely a need-love, but it must be at least this, and never dares to leave need-love behind.

To return to our natural loves. It would be a pretty harsh world if the child, or the sufferer, or anyone in great need, could not find in others a love to correspond to his helplessness. And so we come to that kind of love fathers and mothers hold for their

[1] C. S. Lewis, in *The Four Loves*, a book which cannot be recommended too highly. Those who have read it will appreciate how much I stand in the author's debt.

children; which teachers may develop for their pupils, nurses and doctors for the sick, and so on. This new kind of love is, of course, not a need-love but a gift-love. The mother is the great example of it. She loves her children, and wants to love her children, not for any service they can do her, but for the good she can do them.

The very name mother is enough to remind us that a gift-love is always stronger than the corresponding need-love. Mother loves child far more than child can love mother. We always love those to whom we do good more than we love those who do good to us. Among the reasons for this, Saint Thomas places first that joy which all men must take in their own handiwork. To the extent that we have worked over others, reared or taught or nursed them, we have made them what they are, and so we love them as representing our own best efforts. He goes on to point out that true love is always active and anxious to be doing something to express itself, so that there is bound to be more genuine love in those who do good for others than in those who merely accept what is done for them. Finally, those to whom we have shown kindness have been occasions of virtue for us: through them we have become better than we were; we have loved them, and they have made us better able to love.

AFFECTION

This kind of attachment, of which the great example is mother-love, is perhaps better called affection than love. At any rate, we need a special word for it, and one which can be extended to cover loves which are like it. The love we experience at home, from father and mother, is the most natural, familiar, and constant that we know. Hence we use this same word affection for our attachment to any one or any thing that is natural, familiar, and known for a long time. Our love for grandmother and grandfather, for Aunt Kate, for old Uncle Tony, for brothers and sisters, for our country and countryside — all these deserve to be called affection.

As may be seen from these examples, affection is a steady, quiet, humble, unshakable kind of love. It is modest, inclined to hide itself, sometimes a little ashamed of itself. It arises so naturally and is in itself so natural a thing, that it is almost sure to be felt towards anybody with whom we live long enough, even though

we don't get along with them very well. It does not suppose any equality in people, no common taste or common purpose, as friendship does. It can exist between old and young, between intelligent and stupid, educated and ignorant, strong and weak, and even between good and bad. Two brothers who can't be together long without quarrelling, who have no use for each other's pursuits, hobbies, sports, may yet have a deep affection for each other. They won't admit it, perhaps, but it is there. A problem child, even an idiot child, a cantankerous old patient, the black sheep of the family, anyone with whom a great deal of time is spent or who requires patient care, can draw from others, finally, a firm attachment. Affection is the daily bread of good men and women; it is the true staff of life. We cannot live without it, and are never meant to try. From childhood to old age we must give affection and receive it, but above all give it.

There is no need to insist, therefore, that affection must enter the religious life with us, and must play a part in the new life under vows as important as the part which it plays in family life. Whatever happens, we must never grow incapable of affection or dream of ridding ourselves of it, no matter how hard we may be obliged to struggle in order to elevate and to discipline this simple form of love. And discipline or direction of the affections can be sadly necessary, even in the natural order. Like all the human passions and virtues, this too can be abused, and so make people worse instead of better, doing harm both to the self and to the loved ones. How easily the desire to receive affection can lead one to evil is plain from the common practice of spoiled children, who will whimper, magnifying their fright or pain, until they bring father or mother to the rescue. In older people all sorts of half-conscious little tricks may be resorted to in order to get attention from those who are loved with a mere need-love, or who may not be loved at all.

But stranger still, and far more deadly to human happiness, is affection as a gift-love abused by the giver. Mothers, after long years of devotion to their family, may be unable to face the prospect of their children no longer needing them. In woman, the urge to give affection is profound, so profound that she may not be able to recognize it for what it is: a natural appetite, and

one that can become entirely selfish. As children grow older and need mother less and less, she may work all the harder for them, unconsciously seeking to make them more dependent on herself, trying to put off that dreadful day when they will no longer require her care. She may even come to interpret all signs of interest in things or people outside the family, and all inclination to independence, as indifference and ingratitude towards poor mummy, who has always done her best for them and wants nothing but their good. But of course it is not their good she has come to want; it is her own (although she would be the last to admit this), because all she is seeking now is satisfaction of her own need to lavish affection. Affection of this pitiable kind — need-love masquerading as a gift-love — can also arise in the religious community, as we shall explain later.

FRIENDSHIP

A kind of love with which we are more concerned is friendship, since it is a special purpose of our study to determine what part it may still play in lives which have no goal but the love of Christ. We use the word friendship to describe that love between people which supposes equality on each side. This is probably its great determining characteristic: friends deal with each other on an equal footing; they give and receive the same kind of love in the same degree. Father and son, mother and child, even husband and wife, are therefore not partners in a friendship, since one does not give to the other the same kind of love as is returned. A kind of comradeship marks true friends; they are bound to each other like equal sharers in a single enterprise.

A common aim of some sort is therefore necessary to friendship. What this common aim may be is suggested by Aristotle and Saint Thomas when they separate friendships into three classes: (1) for profit's sake; (2) for pleasure's sake; (3) for virtue's sake. Most of the friendships in the world are of the first two kinds, of course. Consider, for example, the friendships between children. They are always for pleasure's sake (perhaps sometimes for profit's sake, but very rarely). Children cannot enjoy themselves alone; they need playmates, and naturally choose those with whom they are most certain of having a good time. But even among adults,

the most common type of friendship follows the same pattern. "I'll do this for you, if you do that for me" is the law that governs such relationships. People do favors for their neighbors, expecting favors in return — baby-sitting for this family or that, or mowing their lawn, because they fed our cat while we were away; and they speak of obliging neighbors as good old friends, whom you can always count on in a pinch. They pay visits to a particular household because one is always sure of a good game of bridge, or because their parties always go; and when invited back, they are such fun, and always bring something for the lunch.

Such relationships are not to be despised, but they are remote from true friendship; they have no stability, and cannot last any longer than the profit or pleasure which supports them. *"For there is a friend for his own occasion and he will not abide in the day of trouble . . . . And there is a friend a companion at table, and he will not abide in the day of distress"* (Eccles. 6:8, 10). Genuine friendship has to be based on virtue. Only this kind is worth our attention here.

Unless based on virtue, no friendship can amount to much, because it must remain on the level of a need-love, concerned with what can be got out of other persons, not with what they are in themselves. You don't truly love any one until you love them for what they are, not for anything accidental about them — looks, or manners, or plenty of money.

Now, in himself, a man is either good or bad. Since a bad man has no purpose in life but profit or pleasure, with a bad man no friendship is possible except for profit's sake or for pleasure's sake. It follows that true friendship can exist only between good people, and on account of their characters.

This is one of the reasons, as Saint Thomas points out, why genuine friendship can never be sudden. To accept another as a friend is impossible until you get to know him well, and this takes time. A slow acquaintance, in which each party little by little becomes aware of how admirable is the character of the other, leads finally to the mutual acceptance of true friendship. Remember that we are speaking of natural friendship only — the sort that might be found among good pagans. For Christians, whose lives must be centered in the love of Christ, one can imagine

how cautious, prayerful, and patient must be the introduction to any intimacy with another. Saint Teresa of Avila put it so beautifully: that after much consultation of our Lord in prayer, she had decided that a certain person was worthy to be taken "into *our* friendship." We are friends of Christ first, and dare not receive into our intimacy any one who might not be acceptable to him. No true friendship is formed quickly. (Let novices take heed!)

What is it that makes good people good? It is virtue, of course — the power of always doing what you ought to do, of living by reason and not by emotion or feeling. A virtuous intimacy between two people plainly must have the same foundation. It must be reasonable, founded in reason, guided by reason, preserved by reason. It is a union of two people who, as a matter of habit — without thinking of it — do the right thing, and who are drawn together by this innate sense of duty which each finds in the other. The obligations of friendship itself they will take as a duty, and hence there will be no foolish jealousy between them, no sensitiveness to neglect, no calculation of what is due, no accusations of ingratitude. All such feelings they will despise, determining always to be loyal, trusting, and generous; refusing to think ill of a friend whose character they know.

For the friendship they give, good friends never dream of asking anything in return. They think themselves blessed and fortunate to have the company of their friends, and perhaps not even so much as their company; they think themselves lucky to have their friends, as themselves, as persons. They assert no rights over the persons whom they esteem. They are glad to have a friend as one is glad of sunlight after cold, dark weather; one does not dream of getting one's hands on the sunlight, or of controlling it, but one is wonderfully cheered by it and glad it is there.

In fact, true friends, joined in a marriage which is one of minds, will positively dislike the thought of acquiring any right to what the other might be able to give. If one needs money, or some service, or help in an emergency, the other will of course provide it at any cost and with no thought of cost, but with the hope that the favor will be forgotten, ignored, buried from memory at once, so that both may get back as soon as possible to the usual footing. True friends have an instinctive horror of the relationship

which is for pleasure's or for profit's sake. But though neither consciously seeks any return from the other, each of course receives a great and beautiful return. For the possession of a friend upon whose character one can rely, who is an unfailing example of all that we could wish to be ourselves, who is capable of encouraging, advising, and even of correcting, with no thought but for our good, is a unique and tremendous support in the task of leading a good life.

There is a final trait of genuine friendship which is worth mentioning, and to which we shall have occasion to return again. Such friendship is often unconscious, particularly in the beginning. Persons who are now intimate friends often will not be able to tell how it all started. Sometimes they are still unaware of the closeness of the relationship even now; they do not think of themselves as friends in the formal manner in which we have been describing friendship. They have no need to do so. This is largely because the business is not one of emotion; it is not feeling the same things, but thinking and wanting the same things which holds them together; they are one in mind.

False friends and false friendships are obviously going to be more common than true ones.[2] The principles which we have just studied so briefly may help us to identify them. The unworthy attachment is one that is not reasonable, which makes no sense; in which, because the parties have so little in common, there is no possibility of equality between them. When such people seek each other out, the motive can only be pleasure or profit; and this may not always be innocent.

Such intimacies can be explained, obviously, only by passion, by something in the animal and emotional side of the people concerned. In the beginning, the cause of the attraction may have been no more than superficial charm of manner, handsome appearance, or something of the sort; but if the relationship goes on, it

[2] It will be noticed that I avoid the term *particular* friendship. To my mind, this phrase either has no meaning at all — since every friendship, good or bad, has to be particular — or it has the meaning that, in the religious community, since all the members have everything in common, and all are pursuing the common goal of the love of Christ, all ought to hold one another in the same affection, with no special or *particular* regard for this companion rather than that. Whether or not this is the proper stand to take towards friendship within convent or monastery is a question we shall face later.

is almost sure to find a deeper and more dangerous basis. Such emotional affairs are marked by jealousy, hurt feelings, suspicions, and quarrels. Far from expecting no return for their friendship, each party seems to want all the affection the other has to give, and cannot bear that anyone else should have a share. Whereas true friends are never concerned about their devotion to each other, this sort are forever watching over their attachment, confiding in each other, and then wondering if the other has told all. There may also be planning and scheming, to protect the intimacy and to shut out others. It is easy to see how the associates in a case like this are a thoroughly bad influence on each other, and are bound to lead each other into greater and greater weakness and selfishness. Into such unworthy relationships a perverted sexual impulse may even intrude itself; but we will understand this better after we have considered love between the sexes.

THE AUTHORS

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"Every Event and Every Moment"

SISTER M. CELESTINE

New Yorkers for some time past have enjoyed a Broadway musical, "Camelot," which creates an enchanted land where "The rain may never fall until after sundown," and "By eight the morning fog must disappear." At the end of the play, as this magic realm fades from view, the final song reminds the audience that "once there was this fleeting wisp of glory called Camelot." For "one brief shining moment" such a land was real.

The gray of daily life, too, is occasionally shot through with other-world radiance when for a "brief shining moment" man approaches the ideal that every human being carries like a shrouded star deep within himself. Such a burst of splendor is, for the sincere religious, the day of her entrance into that realm of inchoate glory, the Camelot of religious life. Her response to the divine proposal should, under God and with her cooperation, blossom into joy-filled days that will fructify in a blessed eternity. Long ago, Saint Augustine offered a norm for assessing true joy in religious life. His observations are still valid today. "The joy of Christian virgins is Christ, in Christ, with Christ, after Christ, by Christ, and for Christ." In a word, Christ is or should be the *raison d'etre* for every religious. The Saint adds: "You do not have the right to love him only a little, for because of him you have given up even legitimate love," implying that the measure of her love is to love without measure.

Yet despite the shining metaphors of spiritual literature and the heart-warm reality of daily sacramental contact with Christ, the beggar maid's royal romance threatens at times to become lack-luster. She wonders if her humdrum plodding *in via* is really the regal road to glory. It would seem to her that the celestial parapets should be stormed and won through more heroic exploits than lie within the purview of her petty opportunities. Life seems to smother her under a pall of spiritual smog, compounded of daily trivia, defunct ideals, and deflated hopes for holiness.

From such circumstances the religious, consciously or unconsciously, craves deliverance. She projects on the cinemascope of her imagination a self-image wrestling with the BIG challenge around the corner, like some contemporary Beowulf. A materialistic miasma may at times seep through the stoutest cloister walls and incline her to eulogize the eye-catching achievement and the soul-stirring exploit. The prevailing American criterion of excellence, "the bigger the better," colors her value judgments. She is surrounded by sheer bigness — king-size government, king-size business, king-size bombs. Yet infinite Wisdom proposes a countercheck to the earthly yen for bulk, whether physical or metaphorical. In the sacraments Christ effects the transcendent through the insignificant. Because he would have it so, transformations in the world of grace result from the use of humble temporalities: Baptism, a scant trickle of water; Confirmation, a minuscle smudge of chrism; Holy Eucharist, heart of wheat and blood of grape; Penance, the nadir of nothingness, sins; Extreme Unction, a gentle caress with oil; Holy Orders, an anointing; Matrimony, a mutual promise, scarcely audible and lost upon the air as soon as voiced. With trifles like these God engineers sublime metamorphoses in the souls of men.

The modern mind (and that includes the Sister's, since she is a product of the times) has to a great degree lost its hunger for "meaning" in the whirlwind of passing events. The religious, child of her century, tends to live on the periphery of experience, to evade the spiritual resonances of her day-to-day encounters with God through the exigencies of the moment. But events, even the trivial happenings of everyday life, trumpet forth their meaning if she will only listen, for in them she may catch lingering echoes of the songs of Paradise as they filter through to earth. These meanings resonate on several levels of experience, particularly in her spiritual life.

In convents and monasteries, as elsewhere, temptations come in various sizes and guises, subtly geared to the common feminine weakness for personal appreciation. An especially potent brand is that modeled on Christ's mental struggle in the Garden of Olives. The futility of his sacrifice for many souls, who would be forever

iced in a Dantean hell, wrung from his anguished heart, the cry: "What profit is there in my blood?"

Like Elias of old, a religious too may have her juniper trees, in whose Gethsemani shade she gloomily contemplates the passing years with their apparently scant spiritual harvest. Caught up in the doldrums of dull monotony, soul inertia, and general lassitude, "lone-wandering and lost," a religious may at times echo this plaint of the Savior. "What profit is there in my life? Why this waste?" No definitive answer can be given this side of heaven except that supplied by a vibrant faith, a faith nourished and enriched by earnest study of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the "great mystery" alluded to so frequently by Saint Paul. Not the least mysterious aspect of Saint Paul's theological gold mine is the fact that the average religious has failed to work it for the treasure it contains. If assimilated into her spiritual life, this aspect of Christ-on-earth will energize each day's succession of minor events with divine potency, which makes something out of nothing, even those nothings which seem to submerge her aspirations to glory.

The doctrine of the Mystical Body, although the keystone of Pauline theology, may lack appeal to the religious nurtured on a "Jesus and I" mode of spirituality. The Mystical Body is too often conceived as an amorphous, ethereal spiritual entity, devoid of the warm appeal of the Sacred Heart, the passion of Christ, his holy name, his sacred infancy, or other emotionally toned facets of the redeemer's cult. But deeper insight reveals the doctrine in all its splendor as an awe-inspiring yet consoling manifestation of God-with-us.

We are Christ, more a part of him than our body cells are part of us. Mersch[1] notes that the union of the faithful with Christ borders on identity. No vague relationship, this union is a new and profound type of being, more meaningful than their natural life. Saint Augustine, in even more daring terms, states that the faithful are absorbed in the ego of the Savior. Mersch further clarifies this exalted notion: "Christians are not intruders in the inner unity or in the personal life of Jesus, or even in what

[1] Emile Mersch, S. J. *The Whole Christ.* Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1938, p. 431. Translated by John R. Kelly, S.J.

is most strictly His own, His very Ego. They are 'He,' and it is Jesus Himself who says so."[2] It is not Christ alone, therefore, who is deserving of love, but Christ and every other human being, the whole Christ. "The authentic Christ, the only authentic Christ, the Christ whom God has willed to present to the faithful in all the Gospels, is a Christ living in the hearts of His own."[3] God takes possession of man and gives himself to man in that trysting place of the human and the divine, the Mystical Body of Christ. There is mystical progress in the Church in each real expansion of the vivifying Spirit in individual souls. This Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. Jürgensmeier emphasizes the same thought:

> Each effort to attain perfection, each act of moral virtue in the ascetical life signifies no longer a striving after *personal* salvation, but is a function of Christ's life; for the "I" is dead, and Christ alone lives within His mystical member.[4]

A religious, realizing her great debt to the Church, must repay her largesse by promoting her growth and sharing her cares. Narrow isolationism is not worthy of a Catholic, much less of a religious. Exclusive attention to personal interests and spiritual needs, concentration on the minor catastrophes of convent life, apathy toward problems affecting the interests of the Church, neglect to spread her message — all invite failure by default. Involvement is the password now. The Church always suffers when a religious adopts the aloof stance of an uninterested bystander. The history of the Church is but the history of Christ's life filling all things.

The Judean episodes in the life of Christ were only vignettes of a deeper phase, mystical and real, inscribed on the fleshy tablets of human hearts. In his mysterious life in the depths of souls Christ surpasses to a high degree the activity and vitality he displayed in Palestine. In whatever contributes to the development of the Christ-life in the souls of men, the God-Man is still living and growing on earth. It may be said that Christ participates in all human experiences, except sin. Christ knows body hunger in the unfed, mind hunger in the untaught, heart hunger in the unloved. He sleeps with refugees on the streets of the world. In the

[2] Mersch, *ibid.*, p. 432.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 168.
[4] Friedrich Jürgensmeier. *The Mystical Body of Christ.* New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954, p. 202. Translated by Harriet G. Strauss.

light of the Mystical Body, every suffering Oriental, every dispossessed Caucasian, every exploited African is Christ, duplicating his earthly acquaintance with poverty, prejudice, and pain. The *barriadas* of Chile, the *favelas* of Brazil, the slums of metropolitan Juggernauts, the ghettos spawned by race prejudice — all are festering wounds on the Body of Christ. Every human need is a need of Christ. Because suffering is universal in scope and duration during man's mortal existence, Christ is in agony until the end of time. The cry of pain which rises from the four winds will not be stilled until the *parousia.*

For a religious, whose existence is circumscribed by the trivia of daily life, the inability to share in or lighten the sufferings of Christ's stricken members may be in itself, like Mary's compassion, a bitter form of participation. Like Mary, the religious will, for the most part, be limited to compassionating suffering humanity. She may deplore her lack of involvement. She may recoil from "...the safe and vast mediocrity in which the flock of Christ huddles together in its fold, fed and ordered about and kept safe."[5] To share vicariously in the crucifixion of the Mystical Body, a religious will gladly accept whatever slips into her life as a splinter from the cross.

> When the servants of God immolate their bodies and hearts, the Lord spares the body of an unfortunate person whose strength is spent, or cures a sick heart which had not the courage to break its chains. When in the mystical body a generous soul sacrifices its own will, in another the Lord revives a dead will and grants it the grace of conversion.[6]

The heart of the apostolic Sister bleeds for her suffering brethren, and she feels keenly the sweet constraint of providence which has fixed her in her convent niche, bound fast and secure. Daily, as she is wined and dined by Christ in the Eucharist, her prayer becomes a heartbreak as she gathers the tears of the world's spiritually starved into her great longing to share her Christ with them. The wheatless thousands in the famine areas of the spirit

[5] Daniel Berrigan, S.J. "The Catholic Dream World and the Sacred Image," *Worship*, XXXV, 1961, p. 558.

[6] Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, Vol. II. St. Louis: Herder, 1954, p. 221. Translated by Sister M. Timothea Doyle, O.P.

are thus mystically fed at the breadline of her desires, made effective by God's grace, through the communion of saints. She believes, with Buber:

> To close one's heart to one's fellow man is to lock out God.... Only he who himself turns to the other human being and opens himself to him receives the world in him. Only the being whose otherness, accepted by my being, lives and faces me in the whole compression of existence brings the radiance of eternity to me.[7]

Varied as may be the gifts and assignments of a religious, her every work of zeal, no matter how humble and apparently insignificant, augments the growth of the Mystical Body. Conversely, each religious benefits by this development of the Body and by the activity of the other members. Christ has no hands but hers. United and bound together by him, she and the other members of the Mystical Body interchange their blood, their energies, their sympathy, their encouragement, their assistance. What an incentive to grow in love! In the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins:

> ....the just man....
> Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
> Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
> Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
> To the Father through the features of men's faces.[8]

Such lines bring theology into the realm of pure poetry. The religious with deep spiritual perceptiveness will, with Hopkins, feel through the fleshy dress of fellow mortals the "bright roots of everlastingness."

Because religious life is not designed as a social security device or a system of self-cultivation, a Sister must find in an expansive interest in others a release from the slavery of excessive self-preoccupation. Such concern will sound the death knell of the martyr complexes which drain mind and heart of spiritual energy. The doctrine of the Mystical Body lived and loved is a guarantee against provincialism, rigidity of habit and custom, consecrated

[7] Martin Buber. *Between Man and Man.* Boston: Beacon Press, p. 30. Translated by R. G. Smith.

[8] "As kingfishers catch fire." *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 3rd ed. Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 95.

chauvinism, smug complacency, moist and convulsive self-pity — all outgrowths of cloistral and personal isolationism. Wider horizons tend to narrow the stage where self struts and poses.

For the true friend of Christ, there can be no greater incentive to expansiveness of heart and mind than the conviction that she may, through the Mystical Body, give him what human love shares, namely, gracious tokens of consideration and concern and, in a deeper sense, the self-giving which seals friendship. "His (Christ's) own life is in some way increased by all our meritorious acts, for we are but one with Him:. . ."[9] In the *Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena* we read: "I have placed you in the midst of your fellows that you may do to them what you cannot do to me, that is to say, that you may love your neighbor of free grace, without expecting any return from him, and what you do to him *I count as done to me.*" Christ will keep for all eternity the increase of joy received from his devoted servant through her charitable ministrations to his brothers and sisters on earth. Forever he will remember that this joy has come from her and forever he will love her more in return.

To indicate further the close mingling of Christ with the human family, the religious must remember that all her graces stem from the power of God and the human love of Jesus. The love she generously shares with others is first consecrated on the altar of his heart; the feelings and emotions that enrich her human experiences and make her open to the "thou" of others are received from him and are first felt by him before they vibrate on her sensibilities. Whenever the weight of the soul's paltriness, coldness, and mediocrity presses heavily, the religious will find new courage in a living comradeship with Christ. When her shallow piety and flabby asceticism tremble before the spiritual vitality of Christ, she is consoled by the love and sacrifice of his members. When the wine that issues from her winepress almost always tastes of crushed seeds, then the fragrant bouquet of Christ's precious blood will perfume the less. When the soul realizes her pale efforts to imitate Christ and the distorted image her soul reflects, she is aware that other souls mirror Christ much more perfectly, thus compensating for her deficiencies.

[9] Leopold Beaudenom, *Spiritual Progress*, Vol. II. Baltimore: The Carroll Press, 1950, p. 387.

It may help a religious to realize that Christ, with supreme mastery, handles and permeates every detail and phase of life. As Saint Athanasius puts it, the whole world is full of Christ. This world includes the daily round of events in the convent. A religious has "a lifetime burning in every moment" — all that Christ was and is. The precious vintage of the Christ-life enters, drop by drop, moment by moment, into her receptive heart. To change and compound the metaphor, Thomas Merton points up the value of single events and individual moments as they snowball into holiness over the years: "If I were looking for God, every event and every moment would sow, in my will, grains of His life that would spring up one day in a tremendous harvest."[10]

As her only security against the pettiness of self, Christ must become a Sister's environment, her atmosphere, the medium whereby she lives and moves and breathes and loves. With the threads of the Christ-life woven into the natural fibers of her soul, she will outlast the minor and major abrasions of life. "Live on in me and I will live on in you." Christ is life, Christ is action, Christ is the fulcrum that lifts the cold heart and the lethargic spirit into a sphere of incandescent activity. To be in him is to share a labor that is immense; to possess him is to carry in one's soul a pulsing dynamism. Christ still quickens human hearts across the world. He still entwines these hearts with divine fingers.

The doctrine of the Mystical Body is guaranteed to make a success of each Sister. In the life of a religious, interlinking attitudes and emotions, which have become distorted through personal and environmental pressures, may be responsible for an almost fatalistic orientation to daily life and its quasi-tragedies. An unrealistic self-evaluation in terms of zero or near-zero worth must yield to the vastly more encouraging insight that the self is eminently precious to God. The real value of the religious derives from God's love for her and not from any personal qualifications. A mature person accepts reality; self-acceptance is one facet of that reality.

> It is an important element in the life-long process of maturing, through which every personality must continually proceed, to

[10] Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation.* Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1949, p. 18.

learn self-acceptance while practicing self-giving. The Pauline motto, "For me to live is Christ," expresses the goal. Surely this goal implies total satisfaction only with Christ, and a holy dissatisfaction with self — but just as surely it dissolves disheartenment forever.[11]

To repeat, the religious has it in her power to add to the stature of the whole Christ by using her moments well. Though she may be strongly tempted to regard her life as inconsequential, the reality beggars description. Each additional degree of grace compounds the well-being of the entire Mystical Body. But she must, with Dom Marmion, "...try to love His holy Will in the thousand little vexations and interruptions of each day." Christ grows with the vitality she earns through cooperation with grace. As self disappears, his life in her will become more evident, until the glorious moment of complete assimilation to him, when self is demolished and Christ rises, like a divine Phoenix, in full vigor from the ashes.

Life's real splendor lies in the impingement of the temporal on the eternal and of the eternal on the temporal. Time is the matrix of unending glory. The religious is poised between the "neverlastingness" of creatures and the "everlastingness" of God, between passing vanities and eternal verities. Human time, even that which is her portion, is transfigured by the mystery of God, who offers Christ as an antidote for her inadequacies and as a spur to her love. On life's canvas, she must paint Christ's portrait. The passing moments will inescapably sketch its outlines and fill in the colors of the finished masterpiece, whose beauty will grace the celestial courts.

Moment by moment the work progresses. When this mysterious and immense life assignment, so full of "blood, sweat, and tears" is completed, the Spouse of Christ will cast aside forever her preoccupations with the apparently trifling and inconsequential things of earth. She will doff the tatters of her humbling and painful mortality. In exchange, Christ will invest her with the robe of regal and blessed immortality, the happy outcome of countless *fiats* in the passing moments of time.

[11] John C. Schwartz, S.J. "Sister Is a Perfectionist," *Sponsa Regis*, Vol. 33, August, 1962, p. 347.

Virginity According to Saint Paul

PAUL HINNEBUSCH, O.P.

"The time is short! The world as we see it is passing away! I would have you free from care" (I Cor. 7:29, 31-32). With these words Saint Paul introduces his divinely inspired teaching on consecrated virginity. He presents religious life to us in an eschatalogical framework. We grasp the full meaning of virginity only by seeing it from the point of view of the *eschaton*, the last day, the end of all things when Christ comes in all his glory to take us into his glory. The virgin is wholly intent upon the Lord, giving undivided attention to him, awaiting his coming like the five wise virgins in our Lord's parable.

For Saint Paul, the excellence of virginity consists in this, that the virgin is in the perfect position for doing what the whole virgin Church is doing, namely, eagerly awaiting the coming of the Lord. The one essential thing about Christianity is the fact that we belong to the Lord, and he will come for his own, to take them to himself. According to the Scriptures, that is the fundamental characteristic of the Church on earth: she is a bride in eager expectation, living only for her perfect union with her divine bridegroom at his coming. At the close of the Apocalypse, Saint John sums up the whole life of the Church in one sentence: "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' " (Apoc. 22:17). "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Apoc. 22:20).

The best commentary on these words is found in Saint Paul's letter to the Romans, where he shows how the Holy Spirit himself inspires the prayers of the Church, the prayers of the children of God who are the Church (Romans 8:26). Paul has shown how God has adopted us as his children by giving us the Holy Spirit, who inspires us to reach out for God, like a child stretching his arms to embrace his father. In love's burning desire, we cry, "Abba, Father!" (Rom. 8:15).

The Apostle explains, however, that we have only the "first-fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23); that is, we do not yet have him

in all his final fullness. In the Old Law, the offering of the first-fruits of the harvest to God was really a consecration of the whole harvest to him. The first-fruits were promise and pledge that the whole harvest would be used only in God's service, according to his will. And so too when the Holy Spirit, already given to us, is called first-fruits, it means that he is pledge and promise of greater things to come.

Therefore, the Apostle says, "in hope were we saved" (Rom. 8:23). We are still looking for the fullness of our redemption from this corruptible world, which itself eagerly longs to be "delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God" (8:21). Though already we have the Holy Spirit and share in God's own life as his adopted children, we live under a tension — we are torn between this world and the world to come, we are still in the midst of life's tribulations. And so, says the Apostle, we "groan within ourselves . . . waiting for the redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23), for full freedom from "the present distress" (I Cor. 7:26).

The more fervently we love God, the more distressed we are by the things which seem to stand between us and him, and the more ardently we groan for him. "The Spirit himself pleads for us with unutterable groanings" (Rom. 8:26). That is, the divine Spirit dwelling in us inspires us to ask, stirring up our desire for the fullness of our divine life as sons of God, to be given us at the coming of the Lord, when even our bodies will be brought into divine glory. In the Apocalypse, Saint John sums up all this in that one sentence, "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' "

Therefore Saint Paul characterizes Christians as "they who love his coming" (II Tim. 4:8), they who in fervent love for Christ eagerly long for him. And when he comes, the Apostle says, "we shall ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:17). To be ever with the Lord! Such is the whole purpose of the Church's existence. On earth, she lives only for the day of this perfect union of herself, in all her children, with Christ the Bridegroom. Consecrated virgins, living images of the Church, strikingly exemplify these facts in their whole being.

Saint Paul judged everything in the light of the world to come (and Vatican Council I advised us to do the same; Denz.

1796). In that light he answered the questions sent him by the Corinthians about marriage and virginity. Virginity is superior to marriage, he tells them, precisely because the virgin is in a far better position for concentrating wholly on the Lord who is to come.

Jesus himself had explained virginity in that way. "There are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the kingdom of heaven's sake" (Matt. 19:12). They are totally dedicated to the kingdom; they live only for its coming. The kingdom, of course, is Christ's reign in the hearts of men; its coming is his coming into the lives of the redeemed. The virgin is dedicated to bringing about the reign of Christ in her own total being, and in the being of all her fellow men. His coming is perfect only at the end of time when at last he reigns in the whole being — soul and risen body — of all those who are destined for eternal life.

And thus the virgin is consecrated to exactly that to which the Church is consecrated; like the Church, she exists only to advance Christ's reign, to bring him totally into every heart, but first of all into her own. She is a living image of the Church, and bears witness by her whole being to that for which the Church exists — the reign of Christ, his perfect bridal union with all the redeemed at his second coming.

"For this world as we see it is passing away," says the Apostle; therefore, live for the world to come. He tells all Christians to be detached from the world which is coming to an end, to be indifferent to the sorrows and joys of this life, its goods and its pleasures. "This I say, brethren, the time is short. It remains that those who have wives be as if they had none; and those who weep as though not weeping; and those who rejoice, as though not rejoicing; and those who buy as though not possessing; and those who use this world, as though not using it; for this world as we see it is passing away. I would have you free from care" (I Cor. 7:29f); that is, free from all the attachments which distract you from attending totally to the world to come.

Then immediately the Apostle shows how the virgin is the one who is freest of the distractions which divide the heart, and therefore is in the ideal situation for living the essence of Christianity, which is desire for the Lord. "He who is married is concerned about the things of this world, how he may please his

wife; and he is divided. The unmarried woman and the virgin thinks about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy in body and in spirit" (I Cor. 7:34). Saint Paul here uses the word "holy" in the biblical sense of consecrated to God. As consecrated, the virgin — in her whole being, body and spirit — exists totally for the Lord. She is the Lord's own.

The one thing essential about all Christians, we said, is that we are the Lord's own, and he will come to take us to himself. "For none of us lives to himself," says the Apostle, "and none dies to himself; for if we live, we live to the Lord, or if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For this end Christ died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom. 14:7f).

When we live totally for the Lord, we have a holy indifference to all else, riches or poverty, sickness or health, life or death. "He who eats, eats for the Lord... He who does not eat, abstains for the Lord" (Rom. 14:6). A virgin is so totally attached to the Lord that she is completely detached from all else.

Saint Paul would prefer all Christians to be that way — to be so intent upon being the Lord's own that all would be virgins even as he was: "I would that you were all as I am myself" (I Cor. 7:7). It seems that in the past the Corinthians had misunderstood his praise of virginity, and came to the conclusion that marriage was something evil. No, marriage is not evil; it is good. But virginity is better. After explaining to them again that virginity is better only because it is total concentration upon the Lord and frees us from "the present distress" (I Cor. 7:26), Paul adds, "I say this for your benefit, not to put a halter upon you" (I Cor. 7:34). That is, I am not forcing virginity upon anyone, I am only counseling it "to promote what is fitting, so that you may attend upon the Lord without distractions" (v. 35).

This is the essence of virginity: the virgin gives undivided attention to the Lord and his affairs, the advance of his kingdom in the hearts of mankind.

Many a modern religious in the active life is tempted to complain: I have no such freedom to give my undivided attention to the Lord; I have such an overwhelming multitude of duties that I have no freedom for prayer. In answer to this let us look again

at what Saint Paul said. The Confraternity translation makes him say that the virgin is free "to pray to the Lord without distraction." But in a better translation, Paul says that the virgin is free "to give undivided devotion to the Lord." In other words, the virgin's freedom consists in her wholehearted devotedness to the Lord, her total concentration upon him whether in prayer or in work. She is detached and unconcerned about other things precisely because her love's desire fastens her so intently upon him.

In this way she finds her true liberation from the distress and anxiety and tension of human life on earth; nothing matters to her except the fact that she is the Lord's. Whether we eat or whether we abstain, whether we are healthy or whether we are not, whether we are overburdened with work or not — what difference does it make as long as we are the Lord's?

As living image of the Church, the virgin indeed is caught to some extent in that tension between heaven and earth in which the whole Church lives. She too is torn between this world and the next, struggling to be with the Lord, struggling against the contrary pull of the world, the flesh, and the devil. And often enough her greatest distress is caused precisely by her love for the Lord; she is distressed because life's labors and duties seem to give her no time to be with him; or her own emotional or bodily weaknesses are the source of her greatest distraction from him. But she should remember that her intense longing for him is her liberation. Desire for the Lord, intentness upon him, if it is fervent enough, will transform every situation in which we find ourselves. We find freedom as soon as we can say, "It is the Lord's will that I be in this situation; that is enough for me. I am the Lord's; he can do with me what he will."

This is Saint Paul's advice to all Christians: let everyone be content with the situation in which he finds himself. "As the Lord has allotted to each, so let him walk — and so I teach in all the churches... Let every man remain in the calling in which he was called. Were you a slave when you were called (to the faith)? Let it not trouble you." What difference does it make whether you are a slave or a free man, as long as you are the Lord's own? "For a slave who has been called in the Lord, is a freedman of the Lord; just as a freeman who has been called, is a slave of

Christ. You have been bought with a price.... Brethren, in the state in which he was called, let every man remain with God" (I Cor. 7:17-24).

Saint Paul can counsel such contentment even in the midst of slavery and the other imperfect conditions of this life, because "this world as we see it is passing away." Be free from undue concern about it. Be concerned about the things of the Lord who is to come.

This does not mean that Saint Paul does not recommend working for social justice; on the contrary, everywhere in his epistles he gives guiding principles for that task. Bringing about social justice is part of the task of building God's kingdom, bringing the rule of God's will into human relations. But in this place the Apostle's point is that life on earth will never be ideal, it will always bring with it some tribulation. He calls it "the present distress," this fallen world from which we have not yet been totally liberated into the freedom of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19-23).

The whole Church on earth, including her religious, we said, is involved in that great battle between this world and the world to come. Religious, as living images of the Church, are to be leaders in the great struggle for the kingdom of God. They have a mission to bear witness to the kingdom of heaven by their ardent desire for the Lord, and by their consequent detachment from the kingdom of the world. How sad it is when they let themselves become so involved in the spirit of the world that they succumb to it. The only thing which will save any of us from succumbing to the pull of the world's spirit is intense desire for the divine Bridegroom, with groaning for his coming and for the full freedom he will give to enjoy him. Only ardent desire for him will keep our hearts totally concentrated upon him.

The religious has to be a living likeness of the virgin Church in her burning desire for the divine Spouse, inspired by the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' Let everyone who hears say, 'Come!'" Let everyone who sees all of this strikingly exemplified in religious be inspired to desire the same, and say "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Book Reviews

THE BIBLE AND THE UNIVERSE. By Evode Beaucamp, O.F.M. Translated by David Balhatchet. Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1963. Pp. xviii, 200. Cloth, $4.75.

In this day given to much soul-searching and plumbing of the meaning of Christian life in the world, Father Beaucamp has written a book which provides the dimension of depth to a contemporary question. Specifically, his study concerns the vision of the Old Testament Israelites about their responsibility of dominion in the universe. But it suggests an understanding of election in any age.

In his introduction Father Beaucamp observes that Islam, or any religious outlook which concerns itself wholly with the "pure" relations btween God and man, has historically produced only a static culture unable to break out of itself. Then he identifies as the specific characteristic of the Judaeo-Christian his concern with the land given him as part of his promised inheritance; for such a one the material world, too, is caught up in the history of salvation. The Judaeo-Christian accepts his responsibility for the universe. Not in rivalry with God, but in his name, he takes possession of all.

The nature of the study is biblical, and supposes an understanding of the Old Testament themes and outlook: expectation of the kingdom, the dawning realization that Israel's inheritance was the whole world Yahweh had created. Their limited understanding of their charge gave rise to Israel's politically irrational determination to share in the upward movement of history. Then the entrance of Christ into the history of the universe put the partial view in correct focus.

After twenty centuries of Christian living and in the immediacy and confusion of present day pressures, the picture is liable to jarring and distortion. Father Beaucamp establishes the Old Testament base from which rises the Christian attitude toward election and life in the universe.

Sister Mary Dennis, O.S.B.
Mount St. Scholastica
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